

An Invitation To The Ball

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M. WITMARK & SONS,

Witmark Building 144-146 West 37th Street, New York



AN INVITATION TO THE BALL

A Comedy Sketch.

By

HARRY L. NEWTON

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PUBLISHERS

Witmark Building, 144-146 W. 37th Street, New York

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NOTE.—*The musical specialties may be eliminated and singing numbers substituted, if so desired by the performers.*

AN INVITATION TO THE BALL.

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CHARACTERS.

MOSE JOHNSON.....*A Colored Servant*

BIRDIE BRIDSELL.....*Daughter of His Master*

TIME.—The present.

COSTUMES.

MOSE JOHNSON—White linen suit, much too large for him; change on stage as described.

BIRDIE BRIDSELL—Handsome evening gown. Change to Fencing Costume, fancy short skirt, silk stockings, patent-leather, high-heeled shoes, etc.

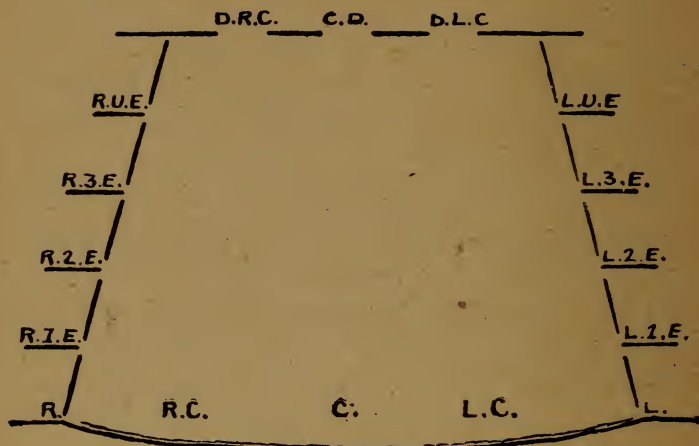
PROPERTIES.

Fencing foil for Birdie. Bell on table. Large square envelope, containing card of invitation to a ball. Coins. Large parrot cage. Large razor.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

As seen by a performer on the stage, facing the audience, R. means right hand; L., left hand; C., centre of stage; R. 2 E., entrance at right, down stage; L. 2 E., entrance at left, down stage.

DIAGRAM OF STAGE.



AUDIENCE.

- L. 1. E.—Left first entrance.
- R. 1. E.—Right first entrance.
- L. U. E.—Left upper entrance.
- C.—Centre of stage.
- R. C.—Right centre of stage.
- L. C.—Left centre of stage.
- C. D.—Centre door.
- D. R. C.—Door right centre.
- D. L. C.—Door left centre.

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SCENE.—Handsome parlor. Table and chairs R. C. Hand bell on table. At rise of curtain BIRDIE runs on from L. 2 E. to table R. C., and rings bell, calling:)

BIRDIE—Mose—oh, Mose!

(MOSE *appears in Center Door; yawns, stretches, etc.*)

MOSE—Did you ring, Miss?

BIRDIE—Yes, but you must have missed a ring or two.

(MOSE *makes no answer, but closes eyes and leans lazily against scenery.*)

BIRDIE (*Runs to him, shakes him, then grabs him by the arm and drags him down the stage*)—What do you mean by falling asleep, sir? I have something important to talk to you about.

MOSE—Then you'll have to see me during my office hours, Miss.

BIRDIE—And when are your office hours?

MOSE—From fourteen-forty to fifteen-ninety on the thirty-eighth of every other month. (*Yawns and closes eyes.*)

BIRDIE (*Grabs and shakes him*)—Wake up! Wake up! I want to talk.

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MOSE—I never saw a woman that didn't.

BIRDIE—I have an invitation to attend a masque ball this evening, and you must accompany me.

MOSE—Go 'long, chile; I never mix with no white trash.

BIRDIE (*Laughs*)—Well, nobody will ever know the difference, Mose. You don't need any mask. You can go just as you are, you know.

MOSE (*Facial business; then*)—Look here, Miss, my face ain't no masquerade. My face is a classic countenance.

BIRDIE—Don't get angry, Mose—

MOSE (*Interrupting*)—My face grew on me, and I've watched it grow for a good many years, and I don't allow nobody to talk about my face—to my face—while I'm face to face with them.

BIRDIE—I apologize, Mose. Now, see here. (*Pulls square envelope from front of dress, takes a card from it.*) I have an invitation for the masque ball, but I have no escort.

MOSE—I ain't got no money, either.

BIRDIE—Money? I didn't say anything about money. I said "*Escort.*" Don't you know what an escort is?

MOSE—Certainly I does.

BIRDIE—Well, what is it?

MOSE—An s-court is—is a—is a—is a place where you go when you steal chickens.

BIRDIE—Nonsense! An escort is one who takes another to some place.

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MOSE—That's what I said. I knew there was a policeman in it.

BIRDIE—No, no! An escort is a gentleman that takes a lady to an entertainment of some kind. Now I want you to be my escort.

MOSE—Oh, go on. Stop your trifling.

BIRDIE—I'm not trifling. I am in earnest.

MOSE—Who am going to put up the dough?

BIRDIE—Dough? Oh, you mean money! Why, it is always customary for the escort to furnish the dough.

MOSE—De escort has no dough at present in his kitchen. (*Turns pockets inside out.*)

BIRDIE (*Laughs*)—Then in that case I will supply the money. Here is twenty-five cents. (*Hands him a quarter.*)

MOSE (*Takes it doubtfully*)—You ain't robbing yourself, are you?

BIRDIE—Oh, no; I have plenty of money!

MOSE (*Aside*)—I'll bet she's a life insurance company by the way she spends her money.

BIRDIE (*Referring to invitation card in her hand*)—Well, Mose, there are several points regarding this ball that I want to explain to you. It does not cost any admission, but the supper will be charged for.

MOSE—Oh, I don't care for that! I got plenty of money. (*Exhibits coin.*) How much am de supper?

BIRDIE—Let me see. (*Looks at card.*) Oh, yes,

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here it is: "Supper will be served at two dollars per plate."

MOSE—Two dollars per plate! (*Looks at coin again.*) Den I reckon we'll have to take a cup and saucer.

BIRDIE—Nonsense!

MOSE—No, twenty-five cents.

BIRDIE—You will also be expected to exhibit your choicest wardrobe.

MOSE—I ain't got nothing but a folding bed. Does it say that on that card?

BIRDIE—Certainly. Look for yourself. (*Hands him card.*)

MOSE (*Takes card and turns it upside down, sideways, etc.*)—By golly, you're right! Look here. What's those letters down at de bottom of de card mean?

BIRDIE (*Looks at card*)—Oh, you mean R. S. V. P.?

MOSE—Yes.

BIRDIE—Those letters are taken from the French, and signify, if you can't attend, send regrets.

MOSE—Oh, go on! Dem letters ain't French.

BIRDIE—What are they, then?

MOSE—Dey are just plain nigger—that's all.

BIRDIE (*Laughs*)—How do you make them out to be "Just Plain Nigger"?

MOSE—Do dey say "R. S. V. P."?

BIRDIE—Yes, that's what they say.

MOSE—Den dey means "Razors Stored in Vest Pockets"—that's all.

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BIRDIE (*Laughs*)—All right. Have it your way. I'm going to prepare myself for the ball. Wait here till I return. (*Runs off R. 2 E.*)

MOSE—Ain't women the mischief, though!

MONOLOGUE.

You know, there are two kinds of women you should be careful of: Those who are married, and those who are not. The other day I thought I should like to get married. You see, the big department stores have a new idea. They have opened a wife department; anybody can go there and get a cheap wife—I mean a wife cheap. You go in the store and the floorwalker asks you what you want. You tell him you would like to have a wife. Then he points with his finger at the wife department, and you go in and look for a bargain. The wives are all tagged and some of them are "It."

The first one I looked at I thought she was a bird, but, by golly, when I got close to her she was a hen! I was afraid she would always be laying for me, so I wouldn't take her. She was awful tall and skinny. She was so tall she told me she had to use opera glasses to see if her hat was on straight.

But the next one was a bunch of peaches. But, my goodness, she was fat! She was marked: "*Special Bargain—Reduced from Five-ninety-eight to Four-ninety-six.*"

I didn't know whether that meant pounds or dollars. I said to the salesman: "My gracious, but she is awful fat!" He says: "You're mistaken; don't you see the sign says that she has been re-

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duced from five-ninety-eight to four-ninety-six?"

"Ha," I says, "I don't want such a big bunch. Can't you show me something in a wife tied together looser?"

He says, "Sure. Over there are three old maids in one package. Price, twenty-five cents."

By golly, that was a bargain! He says: "Would you like to have them three old maids?"

I says: "No, I don't think so. It is too much like buying cigars; three for a quarter."

He says: "It's just the same; most all the men take a wife nowadays just like they buy a cigar. If the outside wrapper looks good, that's all they care."

Well, I told the salesman that I thought I might buy the big party. I wanted to get my money's worth. The salesman asked me if I had ever bought goods of this store before, and I told him I had, but never bought a wife.

He says: "Well, if you ain't satisfied with her when you get her home bring her back and we'll exchange her for you."

I thought that was pretty good of him. Then he asked me if I would take her with me or have her sent. I told him he had better send her. She was too darn big for me to carry. So the next day four piano movers and a furniture van delivered her to me. My gracious, but she was a load! But there is one good thing about her being so large. I am never lonesome when she is home. When she is in the house there is always a crowd. We

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always have a big party when she is around. (*Exit C.*)

(*Enter BIRDIE in fencing costume from R. 2 E.*)

BIRDIE (*Calls*)—Mose! Mose! Where are you?

(*MOSE enters C. He has a large parrot cage in his hand, in which is an old suit of clothes; stands center. Clothes must be old and very much dilapidated.*)

BIRDIE (*Surprised*)—Well, what in the world have you got there?

MOSE—What's it look like to you, a roast chicken?

BIRDIE—No; it looks like a bird cage.

MOSE—Your eyes have grasped the true insignificance, Miss Birdie. Dat am a bird cage.

BIRDIE (*Takes cage from his hand, opens door and takes out coat, lifts it up between thumb and finger*)—My gracious! What a piece of junk!

MOSE—I didn't come here to have my clothes insulted.

BIRDIE (*Takes out vest, lifts it same way*)—Mose, I'm ashamed of you. These clothes are not fit to wear to a dog fight.

MOSE—Well, we ain't going to a dog fight.

BIRDIE—And this—(*Lifts up coat*)—this is a sight! You can't wear them clothes to this swell affair.

MOSE—Den I don't go—dat's all.

BIRDIE—You shall go, but not in those clothes. Wait. I have an idea. (*Lays fencing foil on table and exits for woman's clothing.*)

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MOSE (*Calls after her*)—I got to have something more than an idea to dress myself in.

(*Re-enter BIRDIE with woman's clothes, hat and veil.*)

BIRDIE—Here we are. Now, you take off your coat and vest.

MOSE (*Interrupts*)—Is that all I take off?

BIRDIE—You do just as I tell you, understand?

MOSE—I won't. I ain't going to be no statue for nobody.

BIRDIE (*Throws clothes down, runs to table, picks up foil, jumps in front of him, and thrusts point in his face*)—Do as I tell you, or take the consequences.

MOSE (*Pulls large razor from his pocket, flourishes it in her face*)—R. S. V. P. Which means in plain nigger: "Back up, or I'll cut you down to a whisper."

BIRDIE (*Hits him on his shin with foil; he drops razor with a yell*)—I'll teach you how to behave.

MOSE (*Rubbing his shin*)—Coward! To strike a colored gent on de shin bones.

BIRDIE—Then behave yourself. Are you going to put on these clothes?

MOSE—Well, I guess yes.

BIRDIE—That's a good guess. (*Throws down foil and picks up dress, throws it to him*)—Here, put that on.

MOSE (*Picks skirt up, looks it over, laughs*)—Gee, that's funny!

BIRDIE—What's funny?

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MOSE—That thing ain't got no suspenders.

BIRDIE—It doesn't have to have.

MOSE—Well, it does with me. It looks mighty suspicious to me. (*Steps into skirt with one foot and leg, then stops and looks all about.*)

BIRDIE—Now, what's the matter?

MOSE—I can't find the other leg.

BIRDIE—A dress skirt hasn't any legs. Put it on over your head.

MOSE (*Steps out of skirt and then puts it on over his head; laughs*)—Ha! Ha! Ha!

BIRDIE (*Impatiently*)—Now what's the trouble?

MOSE (*Laughs*)—I done got both feet in one leg—that's what's the matter. (*Goes to take a step, steps on front of skirt. Business of trying to keep from falling. Finally straightens up.*)

BIRDIE—Now, there you are.

MOSE—Yes, I guess I am.

BIRDIE (*Picks up hat*)—Now put this on.

MOSE (*Raises skirt and puts one hand in pants' pocket.*)

BIRDIE—Here, here, stop that!

MOSE—Stop what? I guess I can get a chew o' tobacco if I want to.

BIRDIE—Ladies don't chew tobacco.

MOSE (*Puts skirt down, then business of arranging dress, etc.*)—This lady indulges in a chew of juicy plug or dere ain't a-goin' to be no lady.

BIRDIE—You put on this hat.

MOSE (*Takes hat and puts it on. Lady's voice*

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and manner)—Is my hat on straight? (*Hat is on one side of his head.*)

BIRDIE—No. Put this in it. (*Hands him hat pin.*)

MOSE (*Takes it and jabs it into his head; yells*)—Holy Moses!

BIRDIE—Don't mind a little thing like that.

MOSE (*Looks all about*)—Where is it?

BIRDIE—Where is what?

MOSE—My powder rag.

BIRDIE (*Laughs*)—What in the world do you want of a powder rag?

MOSE—I want you to understand that I'm a real lady, and I got to have a powder rag.

BIRDIE (*Picks up a cloth from table*)—Here's one.

MOSE (*Business of powdering face*)—My, what a refreshment that is!

BIRDIE (*Laughing*)—Who in the world did you ever see use a powder rag?

MOSE—My gal Sue. She has a lovely complexion, and it's all her own, too.

BIRDIE—How do you know it is?

MOSE—I was with her when she bought it. (*Business of putting on veil.*) Did you ever notice the different way different girls in different cities cross a muddy street?

BIRDIE—No, I don't believe I have.

MOSE—Then I'll show you. A Boston girl goes across like this: (*Walks very stiffly, taking little short steps across stage.*)

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BIRDIE—How does a Philadelphia girl walk?

MOSE—A Philadelphia girl never crosses a muddy street.

BIRDIE—Why not?

MOSE—She walks so darn slow the street is dusty before she starts.

BIRDIE—Then show me how a Chicago girl crosses a muddy street.

MOSE (*Picks up skirt above the knees, toes in, and takes long steps across stage, working jaws as if chewing gum.*)

BIRDIE (*Laughs*)—I see you are a good judge of characters. Now, Mose, we will be asked to sing something to-night; suppose we rehearse something now.

MOSE—We'll sing about my gal.

(*Introduce Song for FINALE.*)

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